

In 2019, Tunisia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government drafted a bill regulating the work of private recruitment agencies that send Tunisians to work abroad, creating new positions to monitor the activities of these agencies and note any fraud committed. It also published a new hazardous work list. In addition, it investigated allegations of child trafficking—including forced labor—at the Koranic association in Regueb, subsequently shutting down 11 other associations operating unauthorized Koranic schools in 6 different governorates. However, children in Tunisia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in scavenging for garbage and in street work. The law's minimum age protections cannot be enforced with respect to children who are engaged in work in the informal sector on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order to access the property. The government also failed to provide data on its criminal law enforcement efforts.



## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Tunisia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in domestic work and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in scavenging for garbage and in street work. (1-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Tunisia.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	3.0 (50,364)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	2.8
Primary Completion Rate (%)		95.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS 4), 2011–2012. (7)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming (2,8-12)
	Fishing (2)
	Animal husbandry (2)
	Forestry (2)
Industry	Construction (2,3,12)
Services	Domestic work (2,3,5,10,13)
	Street work, including shining shoes, begging, vending, auto washing and repairing, and scavenging garbage† (2,8,11,14,15)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,9,15-21)
	Use in illicit activities, including stealing, smuggling, and drug trafficking (3,9,11,12,14-17,20,21)
	Forced labor in domestic work and begging, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2-4,9,11,15,22,23)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Migrants and child migrants from Sub-Saharan countries, fleeing unrest in neighboring countries, and young girls from Tunisia's northwest and other interior regions are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. (4,15-17,23) A 2017 National Child Labor Survey indicated that 7.9 percent of all children are engaged in child labor, with 63.2 percent of those involved in hazardous work. The northwest region—consisting of the governorates of Béja, Jendouba, Kef, and Siliana—noted the highest incidence of child labor at 27.7 percent. (2) Figures from the report indicated that children work below the country's minimum age of employment with 48.8 percent in agriculture and fishing, 20.2 percent in commerce, 10.9 percent in manufacturing, 6.4 percent in domestic labor, and 4.7 percent in construction. (2,3) The government has not yet made the full dataset from the survey publicly available or allowed other government agencies to access it, leaving the nature and causes of children's involvement in specific forms of child labor unknown.

Students face barriers to education, especially in rural areas, due to inadequate transportation and household poverty. (3,8,9,11,13) It is estimated that approximately 100,000 students, including a disproportionate number of girls, drop out each year, some because of physical violence in schools. (10,11,24-26)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tunisia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Tunisia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of comprehensive hazardous work prohibitions for children.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 53 of the Labor Code (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 58 of the Labor Code (27)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Ministry of Social Affairs Order of April 1, 2020 (29)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 105, 171, 224, and 250 of the Penal Code; Articles 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, and 8.0 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (30,31)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 2–3, 5, 8, and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 226 <i>ter</i> and 232–234 of the Penal Code; Article 25 of the Child Protection Code; Article 2.7 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons (30-32)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 5 and 11 of Law No. 92.52 on Narcotics (33)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 2 of the National Service Law (34)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 2 of the National Service Law (34)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 2(5) of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons; Articles 3 and 18 of the Child Protection Code (31,32)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Section I of the Law on Education (35)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 38 and 46 of the Constitution; Law on Education (35,36)

The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment drafted a bill related to job placement efforts for Tunisians abroad by private employment agencies. The draft law provides for the creation of a new body of inspectors, whose task will be to monitor the activities of and note any fraud committed by these private employment agencies. (20) In 2019, Tunisia became the 45th state to accede to the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, with the Convention entering into force February 1, 2020. (20,37)

The list of hazardous work first adopted in 2000 and revised in 2019 was published in the official register in April 2020, thereby bringing it into effect. (29) Article I of the new hazardous work list prevents the employment of children in street work, specifically the itinerant sale of items in public streets, on beaches, and in public transport. (3,29,38-40) However, the government acknowledges, as evident from the high rates of recidivism, that the fines and penalties for child labor law violations are not dissuasive. (41)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA)	Conducts labor inspections and assesses fines and penalties for infractions. (9,27) Employs social workers and medical inspectors to assist in addressing issues of child labor. (3) Collaborates with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) to identify and provide support to children vulnerable to child labor. (9,11,18) Monitors the implementation of labor legislation, inspects violations, and initiates prosecutions through the General Directorate of Labor Inspection. (21) Inspects cases of children working under the age of 18, provides medical testing for children, and provides individual authorizations to enable children to appear in public concerts or participate as actors or supporting actors in ads of movies through the General Administration for Medicine and Safety Inspection. (21) Implements social and orientation programs in the field through the General Administration for Social Development. (21)
Ministry of Women, Family, and Childhood (MWFC)	Gathers evidence and conducts investigations on child welfare cases; conducts needs assessments and intervention plans. Acts as judicial police in cases of imminent danger to children through its Delegates for the Protection of Children. (11,32)
Ministry of the Interior (MOI)	Investigates reports of the worst forms of child labor as a criminal violation, including complaints that are outside of the labor inspectorate's mandate and complaints in the informal sector. (14) Through its Child Protection Service in the National Police, addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children and coordinates with MSA and MWFC regarding violations. (9,11,42) Through its Judicial Police, coordinates with MSA to refer cases of at-risk youth. (9,43-45)
Ministry of Justice (MOJ)	Coordinates anti-human trafficking efforts and the criminal enforcement of child labor laws. (18)
Ministry of Education (MOE)	Alerts parents and authorities to truancy in an effort to ensure children attend required schooling. (3)

In 2019, Tunisia became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7. This involves accelerating commitments towards achieving Sustainable Development Target 8.7, which calls for the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery,

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human trafficking, and child labor by 2025, and forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030. (46) The Government of Tunisia created an action plan, which includes the goal, among others, of establishing a database to collect and share data among various public agencies that intervene on issues of child labor. (46)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MSA that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the lack of authority to conduct inspections and enforce minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order to access the property.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$4,400,000 (3)	\$5,310,000 (47,48)
Number of Labor Inspectors	347 (3)	331 (21)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (3)	Yes (47,48)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (3)	N/A (21)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (3)	Yes (47,48)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	17,699 (48)	11,960† (21)
Number Conducted at Worksite	17,699 (48)	11,960† (21)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	92 (39)	39 (21)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (3)	Unknown
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (21)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (47,48)

† Data are from January to October 2019.

Labor law enforcement mechanisms do not exist to enforce the minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order. (3,9,11) The government noted that the budget for staffing and logistics, such as fuel and transportation, were inadequate to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of the country. Ministry officials noted that the labor inspectorate lacked resources to monitor the informal economy, estimated to constitute 38 percent of the country's GDP, and employ 54 percent of the country's total workforce. (3,9,11,12,26,49)

Over the course of the first 6 months of 2019, the MSA intervened in 45 cases of child exploitation, providing assistance to victims. (20) The government did not provide information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected. (21,48)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of publication of criminal law enforcement efforts related to the worst forms of child labor.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (39)	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (39)	Unknown
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (39)	Unknown
Number of Investigations	191 (39)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	11 (39)	Unknown
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (39)	Unknown

During 2019, UNODC trained 40 judges, 13 investigating magistrates, 13 public prosecutors, and 12 police officers. (20) IOM assisted in training 83 officials from MSA on trafficking in persons crimes, detection techniques, and victim protection. There were also various workshops for 36 officials from the MSA on care for survivors of trafficking and listening techniques. (20) The MSA conducted training for 25 labor inspectors and 24 social workers on specialized points of contact for child trafficking victims. (5) The Ministry of Justice reported on the ongoing prosecution of a number of cases with 34 related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (21) However, the government did not provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report.

Following a Ministry of the Interior (MOI) investigation of allegations of child trafficking—including forced labor—at the Koranic association in Regueb in 2019, Tunisian authorities shut down 11 other associations operating unauthorized Koranic schools in 6 different governorates. (5)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
The Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor (PAN-TN)	Coordinates efforts to combat child labor. Led by MSA, includes membership of 11 other ministries and 3 unions, with support from ILO. (14,50,51) In 2019, research was unable to determine whether additional efforts were undertaken related to the prior year's draft bylaw to create a Fight Against Child Labor Unit and an accompanying Operational Strategic Plan within MSA, requiring the Minister's approval. Moreover, research was unable to determine whether efforts were undertaken to coordinate actors on these issues, participate in studies, analyze information, publish and collect data, and prepare and implement work plans and national reports. Nevertheless, the Leadership Committee continued to meet and play an active role in planning and coordinating activities. (3,52)
National Authority on Trafficking in Persons (Instance Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes)	Coordinates anti-human trafficking efforts and raises awareness of human trafficking issues. Includes membership of 12 ministries, 2 members of civil society, a media representative, and a member of the National Commission of Human Rights. (18,44,53-55) In 2019, the National Authority conducted a number of trainings for government officials and enforcement officials on the issues of trafficking in persons. (20) During the reporting period, the National Authority took a number of steps to activate and enhance international and judicial cooperation in trafficking in persons through leadership within policy networks and hosting visiting delegations and exchanges with other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. (48)

In 2019, the government established an ad-hoc committee to review proposed and existing laws related to child exploitation. (20)

During the reporting period, the government established two participatory work teams in Jendouba and Sfax comprising child protection representatives, doctors, labor inspectors, and social workers, representatives of the MOI, and social parties. Teams are under the supervision of the Regional Director of Social Affairs. The team in Sfax focuses on child labor in the service sector, whereas the team in Jendouba focuses on child labor in agriculture. (21)

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### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
Child Labor National Action Plan (PAN-TN) (2015–2020)	Aims to raise awareness, build the capacity of stakeholders, encourage action from NGOs and the public, improve policies, and promote the implementation of existing laws and policies. (14,42,50,56) In 2019, PAN-TN continued to operate, with the Leadership Committee meeting and continuing work on training and development documents. (52)
National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2018–2023)	Aims to establish a global evidence-based approach to address trafficking in persons by coordinating national and international actors. (4,15) In 2019, the Government of Tunisia continued to implement its National Strategy and coordinated with civil society organizations and the IOM to raise awareness about the National Strategy and trafficking in persons in general. (48)
UNICEF Country Program Document (2015–2019)	Aimed to improve quality of education, decrease dropout rates, increase access to early education, teach life skills to adolescents, and improve access to information that protects children against violence and economic exploitation. (57) In 2019, research indicated project activities continued. (48)

The National Authority on Trafficking in Persons and IOM organized an event in June 2019, with 11 other civil society organizations to discuss trafficking in persons and to publicize the 2018–2023 National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons. Other partner organizations of the National Authority also conducted awareness campaigns throughout the reporting period, including *Avocats sans Frontières* (Lawyers without Borders), *Terre d’Asile*, and the Amal Association. (48) As part of the implementation of the national strategy, the National Agency for Employment and Independent Work (ANETI) raised awareness among job seekers through its online platform and during job consultations. ANETI also advised job seekers to avoid communicating with unauthorized placement agencies, as these may provide fake employment contracts. (48)

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL projects in Tunisia aim to conduct research on child labor and strengthen Tunisia’s ability to implement its Child Labor National Action Plan, a multi-stakeholder effort involving government, business, and civil society. These projects include PROTECTE (2016–2021), \$3 million project implemented by ILO; and Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (MAP), \$7 million project implemented in at least 10 countries by ILO. (9,14,52,58,59) Additional information is available on the USDOL website.
Support Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2022)	USDOS-funded project implemented by IOM to carry out anti-human trafficking activities in collaboration with MOJ, MOI, MSA, and MWFC. Includes three objectives: (1) build the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies to identify and assist victims of human trafficking based on their individual needs; (2) strengthen cross-sector cooperation and the sharing of information through the implementation of a national referral mechanism; and (3) conduct an awareness-raising campaign to keep children in school and discourage illegal migration that could lead to human trafficking. (42) In 2019, IOM continued to implement program activities, including its support of the government’s efforts to implement the National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons. (48)
American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative	USDOS-funded project to assist the Government of Tunisia’s National Authority to Combat Trafficking in Persons and enhance capacity of legal actors to prosecute, investigate, and adjudicate human trafficking cases in a victim-centered manner, which began activities in 2018. (55) In 2019, research indicated that project activities continued. (48)
Shelters and Services for Victims of Human Trafficking†	The Government of Tunisia operates shelters to serve victims of human trafficking, predominantly children, which provide lodging, food, clothing, psychological services, legal aid through a network of pro bono lawyers, and free medical care in collaboration with MOH. Adults and unaccompanied children are placed in dedicated centers to receive schooling. (16,45,60–62) In 2019, these shelters operated and continued to provide services. (5)
Centers to Provide Aid to Victims of Child Labor†	The government maintains 79 youth centers that can serve up to 6,000 children engaged in child labor or vulnerable to child labor. (42,63) In 2019, these centers operated and continued to provide services. (48)



**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor (Cont.)**

Program	Description
Programs to Reduce School Dropout Rates†	MOE-funded School Dropout Prevention Program maintains about 2,300 social protection units in schools and mobile units in rural areas to monitor students and prevent school dropout. (63) The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment continued to operate a project to incorporate students who have dropped out into vocational training programs. (21)

† Program is funded by the Government of Tunisia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (44,60)

Although Tunisia has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including in agriculture and fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic labor, and construction. (14)

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Tunisia (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Provide adequate resources, including fuel and transportation, for the labor inspectorate to conduct additional inspections, particularly in remote areas and in the informal economy.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that mechanisms exist to enforce the minimum age protections for children on inhabited premises, such as private homes, without permission of the property owner or a court order.	2014 – 2019
	Collect and publish information related to the criminal enforcement of child labor laws.	2013 – 2019
	Collect and publish information on the number of child labor violations for which penalties were imposed and collected.	2019
	Increase penalties for those who employ children in violation of child labor law protections to reduce recidivism.	2016 – 2019
Social Programs	Publish the microdata of the 2017 National Child Labor Survey so that they can be used to inform programming and policies.	2017 – 2019
	Address barriers to education, especially for girls in rural areas, such as unreliable transportation, household poverty, and physical violence.	2015 – 2019
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic labor, and construction.	2015 – 2019

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